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## **West Side Christian Church Launches Expansion Project Assisted by Aspen Group**

Imagine a place where the Church is relevant, worship is contemporary, relationships are honest, and you have Springfield, IL's West Side Christian Church. But after 14 years of growth at their current campus, Director of Ministries Melissa Sandel explains, it became clear to the church leadership that facility changes were required to continue to impact their community.

"We currently have a number of building-related needs," states Sandel, and Frankfort, IL's Aspen Group was enlisted to meet those needs. "Aspen Group has a proven reputation for partnering with churches to produce game-changing results by leveraging their potential to impact their communities," Sandel states.

Aspen Group began the West Side project with their trademark approach – not with facility designs, but in building relationships with the church staff. "We took time on the front end to understand them – their culture, what they are about, and what makes their ministry unique from other ministries in Springfield," states Senior Project Developer Greg Snider. After meeting with Aspen Group, West Side's Pastor Eddie Lowen was excited that they found a firm that was "interested in building a better church, not merely a church with a better building."

West Side already had significant amounts of space; however, that space was dated. Aspen Group created a Master Plan that includes renovating the existing space as well as expanding the facility with new construction. "The Aspen crew is relentless in their pursuit of fresh ideas for ministry, constantly bringing new findings, methods and success stories to the table," exclaims Sandel. "With each passing meeting, our plans became more refined and focused due to their expertise."

Through interactive design meetings, web-based project facilitation tools and online meetings, Aspen Group didn't merely design new space but collaborated with the church staff to design renovations to their lobby, expand their children's ministry space using themed environments with 3D structures and a volunteer break center, add a chapel that can also be used as overflow space for the main sanctuary, and add new space for student ministry.

Once a Master Plan was complete, the team needed to decide what direction to go for their first phase of construction. "West Side impacts hundreds of young families, which has led to a booming children's ministry that needs additional room to grow," states Sandel. Therefore, addressing the space constraints of this ministry area was made top priority. "We wanted to hit the ball out of the park on experiential children's space," Sandel describes. "One of our Family Ministry goals is for church to be the best hour of every kid's week."

The team developed a camping/outdoors-themed immersive environment that capitalizes existing square footage, and adds new space for large group meeting spaces for group worship and teaching, as well as breakout spaces for smaller groups.

"All of this space was designed with the church to create a space that enhances how the story [of Christ] is taught," explains Snider, "and how it will enhance the church's ability to teach and raise up these young children in the Lord."

"Aspen Group is an organization that has the right people in the right seats on their bus," summarizes Sandel. "Each member of the team is serving in their vocational sweet spot and is passionate about his or her work. They view their business as a ministry, which makes them an asset to any church seeking to honor Christ with their facilities and finances."

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